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7 April 2014

Ms Lisa Zychowicz  
Headteacher  
Harwood Park Primary School  
Hardfield Street  
Heywood  
Lancashire  
OL10 1DG

Dear Ms Zychowicz

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Harwood Park Primary School, Rochdale**

Following my visit to your school on 4 April 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on the findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in January 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- sharpen the post-Ofsted action plan; making sure that the improvement targets are in order of priority and those responsible for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the plan are identified
- provide even more opportunities for pupils to deepen their understanding of mathematics by allowing them to carry out investigations and solve problems set in real life contexts
- ensure that governors receive extra training to enable them to hold senior leaders to account for the impact of their work to improve the school.

## **Evidence**

During the visit I held meetings with you and two other members of the senior leadership team to look at the actions you are taking to improve the school and evaluate their impact. I met with four members of the governing body, including the Chair of Governors, two representatives of the local authority and eight keen, enthusiastic and articulate Year 6 pupils. I also held discussions with the teacher who has subject responsibility for mathematics and the member of staff who ensures that the single central record complies with statutory requirements. The single central record provides evidence of the checks made by the school on the suitability of adults to work with children.

You accompanied me on a tour of the school where I made a number of short visits to lessons where children were engaged in activities related to mathematics. I analysed the school's post-Ofsted action plan, the local authority's bespoke support plan for the school, written in the light of the inspection findings and, with the deputy headteacher, scrutinised the work in a sample of pupils' mathematics books. This enabled me to assess the quality of marking and evaluate the suitability of the work that pupils are given to do.

## **Context**

Since the most recent inspection, two teachers who were employed on a temporary basis have left the school. Two teachers have been recruited to fill the vacancies and will be joining the staff at the beginning of the summer term.

## **Main findings**

Your drive and determination have united governors and senior colleagues behind your vision for improving the school. This vision is encapsulated in the school's mission statement that Harwood Park is a place where people are respected, show kindness to each other, are cooperative and persevere in the face of challenges.

The school is working effectively with other local schools as a member of the 'Supporting Heywood in Excellence' (SHINE) partnership. For example, the subject leader for mathematics has visited a successful partner school to learn about good practice in mathematics. One outcome of this visit is that governors have agreed to purchase a published scheme in mathematics for implementation at the start of the summer term. This scheme provides pupils with a structured programme of study; enabling their teachers to keep a close eye on pupils' progress in mathematics and deal quickly with any misunderstandings they may have. This scheme has proved effective in accelerating pupils' progress in mathematics at the other school and leaders and managers are confident that it will have a similar impact at Harwood Park.

You and your colleagues have carried out an analysis of the curriculum at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. As a result you have restructured the time table and made sure that equal amounts of time are devoted to the teaching of literacy and mathematics. However, it is too early to assess the impact of this change on pupils' outcomes.

Senior leaders have taken effective steps to increase the visibility of mathematics around the school. Wall displays have been revised, with a clear emphasis on mathematics, stressing the importance of the subject to all members of the school community. The school council, given a budget by governors to spend on outdoor apparatus, chose to use the money to purchase mathematics equipment. This is encouraging pupils to further develop their understanding of number through play.

The subject leader for mathematics has plans to carry out an audit of teachers' strengths and areas for development in this subject after Easter. This will enable her to put in place an appropriate programme of training for all her colleagues, enhancing their subject knowledge and preparing them for the planned changes to the curriculum at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.

Since the inspection senior leaders have directed some pupil premium funding (additional finance the school receives for pupils entitled to free school meals, children looked after by the local authority and the children of service families) into targeted support for a number of pupils who require extra help with their mathematics, so that they catch up with their peers. This support allows these pupils to access on-line tuition from a dedicated mathematics tutor. Although this is a relatively new initiative the school's data are showing that most pupils on the programme are making good progress.

Analysis of the work in pupils' mathematics books demonstrates that teachers are using assessment information effectively to plan activities to meet the needs of the different ability groups in the class. More able pupils being given challenging tasks with carefully structured activities for those pupils who find mathematics demanding. However, many of the activities that pupils are given to do emphasise mathematical operations. There are not enough opportunities for pupils to apply these in solving problems set in real life contexts or in carrying out investigations.

Teachers review pupils' work regularly and in accordance with the school's policy. Marking provides pupils with information about what they have done well and what they need to do to make their work even better; with pupils then given time to act on their teachers' advice. Accordingly, marking emphasises to pupils that learning is a partnership between them and their teachers and as a result, has a positive impact on their engagement and progress.

The school's post-Ofsted action plan, written by senior leaders in response to the findings of the inspection, is explicitly linked to the areas for improvement in the report. The actions to address each of the improvement targets are clear and members of staff responsible for carrying them out have been identified. However, the plan is not sharp enough. Those responsible for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the plan have not been identified. In addition the school improvement targets are not in an order of priority so it is not clear which are the most important and therefore should be carried out first. Nevertheless, despite these shortcomings the plan, so far, has been providing you and your colleagues with an effective blueprint for improving the school.

Governors are aware of the work being done by staff and external consultants to develop the school since the most recent inspection; but are less clear about its impact. As a result governors' ability to hold senior leaders to account is impaired. The local authority school improvement service is mindful of the development needs of governors and training is planned to address them.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

### **External support**

The school's membership of the SHINE partnership has enabled Harwood staff to visit their colleagues in other schools in order to share good practice about what works best in the classroom. These visits have already had a positive impact on the way mathematics is taught and informed your plans for the further development of the school.

You have recognised the benefit to you and your colleagues of working with specialist advisers. Consequently, in partnership with the local authority, you have employed the services of two external consultants to work with the staff on improving the quality of teaching and learning in English and mathematics. However, it is too early to assess the impact of their work on pupils' outcomes.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Rochdale.

Yours sincerely

Charles Lowry

**Her Majesty's Inspector**